

THE MIZAN NEWSLETTER

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The Mizan Newsletter aims at giving an objective and balanced account of current Soviet writings on the Middle East.

THE KURDS

Soviet Interest in the Kurds Soviet writers on the Kurds acknowledge their singularity among Middle East peoples, from both the political and the ethnological points of view. T.F. Aristova remarks (1954) on the "considerable interest" which, "at the time of the crisis of the colonial system of imperialism", attaches to the fate of a people spread over the territories of four States, Turkey, Iraq, Persia and Syria - a people who, despite all attempts at forcible assimilation, have kept their own language and national culture. K.K. Kurdoyev (1957) says that, among the peoples of south-west Asia, the Kurds are second only to the Afghans for their tenacious preservation of a tribal society against the inroads of feudalism and, more lately, capitalism. Kurdoyev also says that the Kurds are "among the most oppressed peoples of south-west Asia", and that the Kurdish question "remains one of the most critical and complicated questions of the modern world". In his "Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR" (1958) S.A. Tokarev says that, among the peoples of Transcaucasia, the Kurds are of "particular interest". (The Kurds of the USSR live partly in south-west Azerbaydzhan, in the Karabakh mountains, and partly in Armenia; some live in the towns of Georgia, particularly Tiflis. The 1939 census gave the number of Kurds in the USSR as 45,866. In her article in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1953) Aristova quotes this figure; but in a short monograph published in 1954 she suprisingly gives the figure as "about 160,000". Tokarev, quoting the 1939 census as his authority, gives the figure as 76,000 - Ed.)

Russian interest in the Kurds dates from Tsarist times, and the volume of pre-revolutionary writing on the Kurds is considerable.

Aristova speaks of "considerable material" on Kurdish history, economy, language and ethnology published in Soviet scientific journals between 1925 and 1952; Soviet scholars in this field include the Kurds Amire Avdal, Adzhiye Dzhendzhi, G. Bakayev and K.K. Kurdoyev. Most of the recent Soviet work on the Kurds outside the USSR has been on the Kurds of Persia. In particular, O.L. Vil'chevskiy's monograph "The Mukri Kurds" (1958), based on personal observations made during visits to Mukri Kurdistan during 1942-1946, gives a detailed account of tribes, tribal structure, economy, social relations, domestic life, religion, folklore and literature. T.F. Aristova, in her monograph "The culture and way of life of the Kurdish peasants of Persia" (1958), covers much of the same ground, devoting particular attention to the Kurds' religious practices.

Western attitudes to Kurdish studies are criticized, particularly by Aristova, who says that many works in English on the Kurds "show racist and nationalist tendencies". In Persia, she says, the "assimilationist policy" of the Persian Government prevents any proper ethnographic study of the Persian Kurds, and most works in Persian on the subject "propound Pan-Iranian theories, maintaining that the Kurds in their history, culture and language are the same as Persians".

The Kurds as a Nation Aristova speaks of the "centuries-long struggle of the Kurdish people for freedom and independence - against Greek, Roman, Arab, Mongol, Turkish and Persian conquerors". Tokarev says that in the tenth and eleventh centuries the Kurds "formed an independent State with its own dynasty". Kurdoyev says that in the Middle Ages the Kurdish principalities were only nominally a part of the Turkish or Persian Empires. He quotes the Kurdish chronicler Sherefeddin's proud affirmation that "the greatest sultans and most puissant nobles never encroached on their (the Kurds') country and lands". L.N. Kotlov, in his book THE NATIONAL LIBERATION RISING OF 1920 IN IRAQ, says that regions of Kurdistan and Jebel Sinjar preserved a large degree of internal autonomy until the beginning of the first world war. The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia says that the division of the Kurds among four different countries after the first world war "worsened the situation of the Kurdish people's masses dooming them to the condition of an oppressed national minority".

Speaking of the Kurdish independence movement, Kurdoyev says that the Kurdish rising under Yezdanshir during the Russo-Turkish War of 1853-1856, which "embraced a vast area from Van to Baghdad", played an important role in the national liberation movement of the Kurds. This movement, he says, made big strides forward at the beginning of the twentieth century, with new forces - the student youth and the intelligentsia - entering the field, and the publication of Kurdish nationalist newspapers in Cairo and Geneva. Most Soviet accounts of Kurdish history emphasize the influence exerted on the Kurdish national movement by the Russian revolutions of 1905-7 and 1917.

Risings and Repressions: Turkey and Persia Aristova says that the period between the two world wars was marked by a succession of large and small risings of Kurdish tribes in Persia, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, most of which were of a "democratic and anti-imperialist character". But Aristova, like all Soviet writers on the Kurds, emphasizes that not all Kurdish risings have been of a "progressive" character; the Western Powers, "and especially the American imperialists", have tried to use the Kurdish freedom movement to further their expansionist designs, just as they have used the Kurds for suppressing the democratic movement of the other peoples of Persia, Iraq and Turkey and for interference in the internal affairs of these States.

Kurdoyev says that the biggest Kurdish risings in Turkey, since the first world war, were in 1925, 1927, 1928, 1930 and 1937; in the years 1925-1927 alone about 500,000 Kurds perished. The rising of 1925, says Kurdoyev, was "provoked by the Anglo-French imperialists who, acting in accord with the tribal leaders, tried to use the Kurds in their struggle against the Turkish Republic". Vilchevskiy says that the Turkish ruling classes suppress ruthlessly all Kurdish aspirations to independence and any manifestation of Kurdish culture. He quotes the Turkish newspaper SON POSTA as saying: "In Turkey there never was a Kurdish minority, neither nomad nor settled, neither conscious nor unconscious."

In Persia, says Kurdoyev, the Kurds under Jafar Aga of the Shekkak tribe rose in 1907 to demand local Kurdish autonomy, during the period of the Persian revolution. A rising of the Shekkak tribe led by Ismail Aga Avdoi which began in 1918 continued under Reza Shah, and important risings took place in 1925, 1926, 1928, 1930 and 1937. Reza Shah's Government intensified the persecution of national minorities, and some Kurdish tribes were forcibly transferred to other regions.

Independent Kurdistan 1945-6 The episode of 1945-6 - the formation by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan of an autonomous Kurdish administration based on Mahabad - receives considerable attention from Soviet writers. The basic aim of the movement, says the Soviet handbook CONTEMPORARY PERSIA, was "to set up a free, autonomous democratic Kurdistan within Persia". Differing accounts are given of the composition of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Vil'chevskiy says that in Mahabad by the eve of the second world war a politically conscious proletariat had grown up, making common cause with the petit bourgeoisie and the distressed peasants. In 1942, he says, the workers formed in Mahabad one of the first cells of the Tudeh Party, "which later became the nucleus of the Democratic Party of the Kurds of Persia". Kurdoyev, on the other hand, says that the Democratic Party of Kurdistan was composed of "the progressive intelligentsia, national bourgeoisie, landowners and clergy".

Of the "progressive" reforms of the autonomous Kurdistan Government, as distinct from its purely nationalist objectives, Soviet writers say little.

Aristova points to the introduction of universal free education; Kurdoyev speaks of the introduction of agrarian legislation. The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, however, says that no agrarian reform was introduced in autonomous Kurdistan, as in autonomous Persian Azerbaijan during the same period.

At the time the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia was published (1953) the Democratic Party of Kurdistan was evidently still regarded as the active protagonist of the Kurdish national liberation movement. Aristova says, in her article in the Encyclopaedia: "The Kurds fight under the leadership of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan ... and its sections in Iraq and other countries." Recent writings on the subject, however, make no reference to the continuing existence of a Democratic Party of Kurdistan either inside Persia or outside; the handbook CONTEMPORARY IRAN merely says that the party "was suppressed in 1946".

Kurdish nationalism in Iraq The situation of the Kurdish national movement in Iraq at the time of the British occupation is analysed by L.N. Kotlov in THE NATIONAL LIBERATION RISING OF 1920 IN IRAQ. In Iraq, he says, little headway had been made by the Kurdish nationalist movements working for the formation of a Kurdish national State, the most important of which were those working from Cairo and Constantinople. The Kurdish national movement in general was less active than the Arab national movement at that time. On the other hand, Kotlov asserts, organizations of nationalist groups of Kurdish feudalists and intellectuals of Turkey and Iraq had been formed under the patronage of the British secret service; almost all Kurdish nationalist groups in Turkey and Iraq looked for aid from some foreign State, and most of these groups were pro-British. The national movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, Kotlov concludes, was headed by feudalists, and in the first place by tribal and spiritual leaders.

The British in Iraq, says Kotlov, were at first compelled to allow some measure of local autonomy to the Kurdish areas, owing to lack of adequate security forces; but they later tried to regain control from the tribal leaders by gradual stages, and it was this which provoked the rising led by Shaykh Mahmud. Of Shaykh Mahmud himself Kotlov writes with little sympathy; his rising, he says, was defeated not only by his enemies' support of the British forces, but also through lack of momentum in the rising itself; at one time Shaykh Mahmud himself tried to open secret negotiations with the British authorities. But despite the failure of the rising, says Kotlov, it was difficult to overestimate its importance: "in the course of the rising for the first time in the history of Kurdistan the question was raised of the formation of an independent Kurdish State."

The actual British project for an independent Kurdistan is not discussed by Kotlov, presumably because it is outside the scope of his study.

The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia has the following to say on this subject, under "Iraq":

"Having seized the Mosul area, the British occupiers made an attempt to use the Kurds ... for the struggle against the Arab national liberation movement, and also for wresting the Kurdish districts from Turkey. The British imperialists put forward the slogan of the creation of an 'independent' Kurdistan within the system of British possessions, which drew the Kurdish feudal leadership to their side."

Kurds, Arabs and Communists Soviet writers speak of the gradual growth among Kurds in Iraq, as in Persia, of a workers' movement; and it is noticeable how the ideal of Kurdish-Arab friendship is particularly mentioned in this context. Kotlov says that risings of Turks and Arabs during 1919 "played an important role in the preparation of the working masses of the country, both Kurds and Arabs, for the further struggle against the occupiers". Speaking of the growth of the Kurdish proletariat since the second world war, the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia says:

"In the Kurdish national movement the leading role passed from the feudal and bourgeois leadership into the hands of the Kurdish Democratic Party, which is the party of a bloc of various classes, in which the Kurdish workers play a prominent role. This party concluded an alliance with the Communist Party of Iraq, which laid the foundation for rapprochement between Kurds and Arabs."

(Note: Co-operation between the Communist Party of Iraq and the present United Democratic Party of Kurdistan was the subject of an agreement concluded between the two parties on 10th October 1958. This was stated in the first issue of KHEBAT, the organ of the United Democratic Party of Kurdistan, published in Baghdad on 4th April 1959 - Ed.)

B.M. Dantsig, in his short handbook IRAQ, published in 1955, says: "After the second world war the Kurdish national liberation movement became part of the general national movement of the Iraqi people against imperialism and landlord oppression, for peace, and against the unleashing of a new war."

Thus the emphasis on Kurdish-Arab brotherhood, which is so much a feature of the new regime in Iraq, can be echoed with confidence by Soviet writers since it has long been part of their own teaching. They have clearly stated that the Kurds in their different countries must and will join forces with the nation-wide "democratic" and "national liberation" movements of these countries. Kurdoyev states this as follows: "The democratic elements among the Kurdish people know well that the only way

to the solution of the 'Kurdish question' is by the unity of the working Kurds with the progressive forces of the Persian, Turkish and Iraqi peoples and the formation of one front of struggle for freedom and democracy." Kurdish nationalist aspirations, however important, are regarded as secondary to the need for working-class unity in a struggle that is shared by all the inhabitants of each State - even where that State, like Persia, is classed as "multi-national".

Recent Soviet Writing on the Kurds and the Kurdish Language According to VOPROSY ISTORII No. 4 of 1959, the Deputy Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences R.A. Ul'yanovskiy drew attention in his report for 1958 to the "absence of fundamental works" on, amongst other things, the Kurdish problem. The following is a list of recent Soviet writings on the Kurds and on the Kurdish language.

Aristova, T.F.	1954	"The Kurds of Persia", KRATKIYE SOOBShCHENIYA INSTITUTA ETNOGRAFIY, pp. 98-104.
do.	1958	"An Outline of the Culture and Everyday Life of the Kurdish Peasants of Persia", TRUDY INSTITUTA ETNOGRAFIY IMENI MIKLUKHO-MAKLAYA No.39 of 1958, pp. 223-258.
do.	1958	"A Visit to the Kurds of Transcaucasia", SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA No.6, pp. 134-145.
I.O. Farizov	1957	RUSSKO-KURDSKIY SLOVAR' (A Russian-Kurdish Dictionary).
Kurdoyev, K.K.	1955-6	"A Criticism of Erroneous Views on the Kurdish Language", and "Partitive and Collective Words in Kurdish", KRATKIYE SOOBShCHENIYA INSTITUTA VOSTOKOVEDENIYA Nos. 12 and 22.
do.	1957	GRAMMATIKA KURDSKOGO YAZYKA (A Grammar of the Kurdish Language).
do.	1957	Chapter "The Kurds", NARODY PEREDNEY AZII, pp. 242-260.
Tokarev, S.A.	1958	"The Kurds" and "The Yezidis" in chapter "The Peoples of the Caucasus", ETNOGRAFIYA NARODOV SSSR, pp. 301-4.
Vil'chevskiy, O.L.	1958	"The Mukri Kurds", TRUDY INSTITUTA ETNOGRAFIY IMENI MIKLUKHO-MAKLAYA No. 39 of 1958, pp.180-222.

An account of some of the above studies on the Kurds of the USSR and of Persia will appear in the next number of CENTRAL ASIAN REVIEW, Vol. VII No. 2, which is issued by this Centre.

MIDDLE EAST OIL: THE SOVIET CASE AGAINST THE WEST

Oil Companies and Foreign Policy The Western oil companies and their activities in the Middle East have long been the object of Soviet invective. For the Soviet reader their character is adequately conveyed in the term "oil monopolies". In Soviet writing they are conventionally represented as guiding, and even initiating, Western policy towards the Middle East countries.

In a speech in the US Senate on 1st March 1957 Senator Kefauver declared his opposition to the Eisenhower Doctrine because, among other things, "there is too much evidence that the cloth of this programme is primarily cut to fit the needs of the international oil companies, and that, instead of oil being a factor in the formation of foreign policy, oil has, instead, become the dominating influence"; the doctrine, said Senator Kefauver, had been framed at the instance of the big US oil companies, one of its principal objectives being to secure the oil companies' Middle East concessions against nationalization. This speech of Senator Kefauver's was published in full in the Soviet monthly *INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS* for September 1957, as confirming the Soviet contention that the US Government is an instrument of the big oil companies. (Soviet writers claim that this state of affairs dates from the time of President Harding, whom they represent as himself a former oil magnate). At the same time Soviet writers affirm that it is State Department intervention and pressure that has made possible for the oil companies their penetration and expansion in the Middle East countries.

The Concession Agreements Typical Soviet descriptions of the Western oil companies' concession agreements are "unequal treaties imposed on the eastern countries by imperialist pressure and violence", and "enslaving concession agreements imposed by means of blackmail, intrigue and outright bribery" (*INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS* No.6 of 1957 and No.9 of 1958). However, actual Soviet accounts of how the concession agreements were secured are less lurid. I.P. Belyayev, in *AMERICAN IMPERIALISM IN SAUDI ARABIA* (1958) maintains that the American oil companies forced inequitable agreements on the Saudi Government at times of financial stringency. V.S. Baskin, in *THE OIL MONOPOLIES IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST* (1957) directs little of his criticism to the actual manner of securing the oil concessions. Speaking of the original oil agreements with Iraq, he says that King Faysal was "ready to fulfil any demands of Britain"; and the agreements with the Gulf States he represents as in like manner easily obtained from compliant rulers.

One charge made against the oil agreements is the wholesale and "monopolist" character of the territorial concessions; these, says Baskin, cover not only the areas to be exploited but also vast adjacent areas,

merely to prevent the latter being exploited by competitors. Again, the wide rights and privileges obtained under the agreements are a common subject of criticism; these, according to an article in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (No.9 of 1958), amount to a "capitulations regime", the staffs of the oil companies not being subject to local legislation.

The financial terms of the agreements are those most widely condemned. The scale of concession payments is in all cases represented as only a fraction of what it should be. It is also maintained that the agreements contain deliberate provisions which allow scope for "machinations" to the financial detriment of the contracting Government.

Exploitation Methods The oil companies are commonly accused by Soviet writers of "plundering the natural resources of the Middle East countries". By this is meant not only taking the oil without adequate payment, but also wasting the oil itself by wholesale and unscrupulous extraction methods. V.S. Baskin accuses the oil companies of reckless and "rapacious" extraction methods, leading to undue loss of gas pressure and consequent early failure of borings, leaving large quantities of oil in the ground. He also complains that no proper use is made of natural gas, which he says could be used for industry, power stations and homes or for the manufacture of artificial fertilizers and other chemical products; the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, he says, has calculated that the natural gas which is burnt in Middle East oilfields alone could double world output of nitric fertilizers.

At the same time it is alleged that Middle East oil production has at times been deliberately limited by the oil companies, particularly in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, with an eye to overall world profits. It is also maintained that individual oilfields and oilwells are left unworked if their location does not allow for easy profits.

The Oil Companies' Profits The profits of the oil companies are perhaps the commonest object of Soviet criticism. Baskin calculates that in Saudi Arabia ARAMCO's receipts from oil production in 1948 amounted to 30 times its total wage bill; that in the Middle East in 1954 the cost of production per barrel was from nine to twenty-two times cheaper than in the USA; and that in the period 1934-9 Standard Oil of New Jersey "received on every barrel of Iraqi oil 52 cents profit, which was about seven times the cost of production in Iraq and was more than twice the sum paid per barrel to the Iraqi Government". It is only from such figures as the latter, says Baskin in his chapter on Iraq, that it is possible to obtain some idea of the profits obtained by the Iraq Petroleum Company as a whole, since "all details of the company's financial activity are carefully hidden". Another typical charge (INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS No.9 of 1958) is that the oil companies "falsify their annual reports, artificially reducing their profits".

The size of these profits is contrasted with the scale of concession payments made to Middle East Governments. In 1948, says Baskin, concession payments and taxes amounted to some 13-35 cents a barrel, while in Venezuela the average figure was 86 cents; since 1950 the oil companies had been forced by popular demand to adopt the 50-50 profit-sharing principle, but they had recourse to various devices to prevent the oil countries getting their full half of the profits. One such device is described by Ye. Primakov in THE COUNTRIES OF ARABIA AND COLONIALISM:

"ARAMCO every year sells not less than three-quarters of the oil produced in Saudi Arabia to its parent companies ... which sell the oil independently. The OIL AND GAS JOURNAL in 1952 said that this sale was effected at a price of 32 cents a barrel lower than the market price. THE ARAMCO bosses have lost nothing by this, since they are also the bosses of the parent companies. They have in fact only transferred the profits from one pocket to another. But in this way ARAMCO's profit was artificially lowered by 70 m. dollars. As a result ARAMCO in fact robbed Saudi Arabia of 35 m. dollars".

Baskin accuses the Iraq Petroleum Company of similar manipulations. Another method of concealing profits used by ARAMCO, says Primakov, is the creation of special reserve funds, allocations to which are set off against profits: "the proportions of these are shown by the fact that on 1st January 1954 the 'undistributed profits' of Standard Oil of New Jersey ... reached the colossal figure of 2,465 m. dollars, more than one and a half times the entire share capital of the company".

Economic and Political Influence Soviet writers describe the economies of the Middle East oil-producing countries as "one-sided", "unbalanced" and "deformed", and attribute this to the failure of the Western capitalists to invest in anything but the oil industries of these countries, although they are rich in other minerals and raw materials. Baskin declares: "The monopolists only invest their capital in those branches of the economy which will assure them high profits". Belyayev cites the case of barytes, used in oil refining, which "is imported from abroad, although the deposits of it in Saudi Arabia would permit the annual production of 10,000 tons of this important chemical raw material". The pattern of US capital investment in Saudi Arabia, says Belyayev, has discouraged the development of local industry and agriculture, while such branches of the economy as transport and building, which assist the oil companies, are promoted. In the oil industry itself, it is alleged, local refining has been deliberately limited, to keep the Middle East countries dependent on the West in this respect.

The oil companies are also accused of acting as a brake on the social and political development of the Middle East countries, particularly by supporting local feudal elements. Primakov condemns the use of oil revenues to meet "the unproductive expenses of the feudal circles in power" in Saudi Arabia, where 13 per cent of ARAMCO's annual concession payment, he says, went to the construction of a royal palace in Jiddah.

Political interference is particularly alleged in the matter of the pipelines; it is asserted that the oil companies have used the building and presence of pipelines through Syria, the Lebanon and Jordan as an opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of these countries.

Conditions in the Industry All Soviet accounts of conditions in the oil industry depict local workers as underpaid; "starvation wages" are often spoken of. Lack of housing, rudimentary health services, "racial discrimination" between local and expatriate employees, and even employment of child labour are only a few of the accusations made against the companies (see MIZAN NEWSLETTER No.1, pp. 7-8 and No.4, p.3).

In conclusion, a study of the more considered Soviet writings on this subject shows that Soviet accusations against the Western oil companies are not a mere propaganda convention but can be supported, for Soviet purposes, with a fund of arguments and documentary material.

(Next issue: "Middle East Oil: Soviet Views on Ownership")

NEW PARTY TASKS FOR SOVIET ORIENTALISTS

The XXIst Soviet Communist Party Congress (27th January - 5th February 1959) was notable, from the Middle East point of view, for pronouncements on the role of the Communist Parties in national movements in the Middle East (see MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 2). The tasks and, to a certain extent, the new direction which the Congress has given to Soviet oriental studies have now been set forth in broad outlines in the first issue of PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA, the new journal of oriental studies which has replaced SOVETSKOYE VOSTOKOVEDENIYE (see Appendix). Meanwhile, VOPROSY ISTORII No.4 of 1959 summarizes a report on the activities of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences during 1958, made by the Deputy Director of the Institute R.A. Ul'yanovskiy; this suggests that a new approach is required from Soviet scholars toward certain basic questions concerning the development of eastern countries.

Reassessment of the "National Bourgeoisie" For Soviet orientalists two main subjects of study since the XXth Party Congress of February 1956 have been "the disintegration of the colonial system of imperialism" and "the national liberation struggle of nations of the East". These still remain the central subjects; but on one important issue, namely the place of the "national bourgeoisie" in relation to imperialism on the one hand and to the national liberation movement on the other, there is now a noticeable departure from the attitude laid down by the XXth Congress, and perhaps a return to earlier Soviet thinking on the subject.

SOVETSKOYE VOSTOKOVEDENIYE No. 1 of 1956, in an account of the tasks laid down by the XXth Congress, called for a reassessment of the political role of the national bourgeoisie in eastern countries, citing India and the Arab countries as examples of countries where the national bourgeoisie had been at the front of the anti-imperialist struggle. The journal deplored the fact that "the dialectical conception of the dual nature of the national bourgeoisie has been replaced by a one-sided conception of it as the faithful ally of imperialism in the struggle against the working masses". In accordance with the new favourable assessment of the national bourgeoisie, subsequent Soviet writing on the national movements of eastern countries has in general found praise for the role of the bourgeoisie in these movements.

In contrast with this, according to VOPROSY ISTORII No. 4 of 1959, the Deputy Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies now complains that in Soviet orientalists' work during 1958 "a sufficiently penetrating light has not yet been thrown on such questions as the essential opposition between the working-class and the national bourgeoisie, class distinctions among peasants, the part played by the national bourgeoisie in the exploitation of the peasantry, the connection of the national bourgeoisie with foreign capital, the political parties of the bourgeoisie, their ideology, strategy and tactics at the present stage, and their attitude towards the socialist camp and towards the international communist and workers' movement".

"Non-Capitalist" Political and Social Forces The PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA article on the XXIst Congress makes it clear that this reassessment of the national bourgeoisie does not mean a change of attitude towards the "liberated" but non-socialist countries of the East. The writer observes that, although "certain leading figures" of these countries have lent their support to an anti-communist campaign, "many of the leading men of these countries are benevolently disposed towards the socialist countries". What is needed, the writer insists, is a closer study of the political and economic structure of the sovereign countries of the East; of their "specific paths of economic development"; of "problems connected with State capitalism in countries of the East"; of the possibilities for

economic development by "non-capitalist methods"; of the distribution of social forces in these countries; and - "a backward department of oriental studies" - the position of the working class and the workers' movement. The reference to "non-capitalist methods of development" is an echo of the pronouncement of Khrushchev, quoted by the writer:

"These countries, which have won national independence as a result of the liberation struggle, want to go their own way, by-passing the capitalist stage of development, in order, having finished with colonial oppression, to set about the building of society on other principles."

According to VOPROSY ISTORII, a "special scientific research group" has been set up in the Institute of Oriental Studies which will produce works on such "important present-day problems" as the position of the working class and the workers' movement in the countries of the East. The position of agricultural workers, too, will not be neglected:

"In the immediate future the Institute will have to prepare a series of monographs on agrarian conditions in the East. During the post-war period a serious falling-off had been observed in the study of this subject; this had been evident not only in a narrowing of the scope of research operations but also in an incorrect evaluation of the changes in agrarian organization in the East resulting from the bourgeois reforms in Japan, India, Egypt, Burma and other countries."

SOVIET ANGLE ON THE NEWS

Below are reviewed Soviet newspaper reports on Middle East events published during the period 1st April - 13th May.

The Soviet-Iraqi economic agreement The Gazette of the Supreme Soviet for 23rd April published the text of the Soviet-Iraqi economic and technical co-operation agreement signed on 16th March. According to a first list appended to the agreement, the USSR will give technical aid in the following projects: an iron and steel works; a nitrogenous fertilizer factory; a sulphur and sulphuric acid factory; a pharmaceutical products factory; a factory for agricultural machines and implements; an electric motor factory; an electric lamp factory; a radio centre consisting of four 100 kw. short-wave transmitters in the Baghdad area; a glass factory; a cotton combine; a factory for woollen cloth; a factory for socks, stockings and knitwear; a sewing works; geological survey and prospecting work; two grain elevators; a canning factory; State farms for the production of sugar-beet, cotton, unirrigated grain crops, rice and medicinal

plants; four tractor stations of 100 tractors each; the draining of 1,500,000 hectares of irrigated land in southern Iraq; drawing up plans for utilization of the Tigris and Euphrates; improvement of navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates; railway lines from Baghdad to Basrah (broad-gauge) and from Kirkuk to Sulaymaniyah. Completion dates were given for the various projects.

According to a second list appended to the agreement, the USSR will also give technical aid in the following projects (completion dates not stated): a factory for caustic soda, etc; a plastics factory; a works for the construction and repair of river vessels; equipment for structures for regulating and improving navigation on the Euphrates and the Tigris and for the improvement of irrigated land in southern Iraq; the drilling of 300 boreholes for water to a depth of 100-200 metres; the reconstruction of existing moorings at the port of Basrah and the construction of new ones; three automatic telephone exchanges of 10,000 numbers each for Baghdad; a plan for radio and television development; the reconstruction of the aerials of Baghdad radio; the study of motor roads; and new products from dates.

The Soviet-Iraqi cultural agreement An agreement on cultural co-operation between the USSR and Iraq was signed in Baghdad on 5th May. The agreement provides for the exchange of students and teachers; co-operation between scientific institutions and cultural organizations; the exchange of books, publications, films and photographs; co-operation in press, radio and television by the exchange of specialists; mutual visits by cultural, sporting, youth and student organizations and the holding of functions to strengthen cultural links; and the foundation in Soviet and Iraqi universities of chairs for the study of the language, culture and literature of the other country.

The Iraqi political and economic scene Reports from Baghdad formed the bulk of Soviet newspapers' Middle East news coverage - speeches by Qasim, Iraqi newspapers' praise for Soviet-Iraqi economic and cultural co-operation, the Baghdad peace defenders' conference of 14th-18th April, the Bandung Conference anniversary celebrations on 24th April, and the May Day celebrations. (Recent Soviet accounts of economic and political developments in Iraq will be reviewed in the next issue of the MIZAN NEWSLETTER - Ed.)

The repatriation of Iraqi Kurds from the USSR A Tass statement published in Soviet newspapers on 12th April 1959 denied a Western report, quoted in UAR newspapers, that a ship had passed through the Suez Canal bound for Iraq carrying 855 "young armed Soviet Kurds well trained in guerrilla warfare". This report, said Tass, was a complete invention. The Soviet vessel

Gruziya had sailed from Odessa for Basrah at the beginning of April carrying 459 Kurds, Iraqi citizens, with their families numbering 394 persons; they had fled from persecution in Iraq under the Nuri as-Sa'id regime in 1947, as a result of their participation in the national liberation movement of the Iraqi people, and had found refuge in the USSR, where they had been living "in various localities"; after the Iraqi revolution they had expressed the wish to return to their country, and the Iraqi Government had communicated its readiness to receive them; they were being repatriated under the auspices of the Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent. They included about 100 aged men and invalids.

In a dispatch from Port Said published in IZVESTIYA on 15.4.59 Kondrashov said that Cairo newspapers had distorted the Tass statement, presenting it as confirmation of their stories about "Russian Kurdish volunteers" being dispatched to Iraq; and they were now claiming that the Soviet vessels Argun and Stavropol were also carrying Soviet Kurds and arms to Iraq, that the Ivanovo was carrying 11,600 tons of military supplies, and that the Soviet tugboat No. 60506 had suspiciously refused to reveal its destination. In fact, said Kondrashov, the Argun was proceeding to Suez, where she unloaded industrial plant for the UAR's five-year plan, and would then proceed to Yemen with a cargo of sugar; the Stavropol was taking cement to Rangoon; the Ivanovo was bringing crude oil for the UAR; and the tugboat was proceeding to the Far East with only her crew on board. "To check the facts is extremely easy, for the USSR makes no secret about its deliveries of industrial equipment and oil to the UAR. Not so long ago the selfsame Cairo papers reported regularly on such deliveries. But now their place has been taken by anti-Soviet falsifications."

In a dispatch from Basrah published in PRAVDA on 18th April 1959 Demchenko gave an account of the enthusiastic reception given to the Kurds in the Gruziya on their arrival in Basrah. He quoted statements made by some of the Kurds about their life in the Soviet Union and the accomplishments they had acquired there, "after being in the position of an oppressed national minority in Iraq". Many of them, he said, had been illiterate; now more than 60 per cent of them had had secondary and higher education, and two of them were Candidates of Sciences. "In the USSR the Iraqi patriots not only found political asylum but were able to pursue their professions as construction engineers, agronomists and teachers." Sulayman Hakim Yasin was an agronomist, having completed his studies at the agricultural institute in Tashkent. His companion Abd ar-Rahman Habib was a specialist in the history of eastern countries.

On 6th May 1959 Soviet newspapers published a statement by the Kurdish leader and repatriate from the USSR Mustafa al-Barzani which had appeared in the Iraqi AZ-ZAMAN. Al-Barzani expressed his gratitude to the USSR for the hospitality and care he and his fellow-tribesmen had received, and denounced Western, Israeli and UAR reports that the USSR was sending armed Soviet Kurds to Iraq.

Soviet-UAR relations PRAVDA gave a full account of the Cairo press conference of 3rd May at which Musa Arafah, the Egyptian Minister of Public Works, expressed his satisfaction with the progress of the Aswan High Dam project and with Soviet-Egyptian co-operation on it. Soviet newspapers reported that the delegation headed by Musa Arafah which arrived in Moscow on 6th May studied Soviet plans and models of the High Dam project, and were informed that Soviet experts had completed ahead of schedule the first item in their project.

On 7th April Soviet newspapers quoted reports that the renewal of US Four-Point Aid to Egypt had been discussed at a meeting between President Abd an-Nasir and the US Ambassador, and that US experts to administer the aid would be arriving in Cairo shortly.

There were further Soviet denials of UAR newspaper reports. A Tass statement, in PRAVDA on 9th May, denounced as a complete fabrication an AL-JUMHURIYAH report that an Anglo-Soviet agreement about Iraqi oil had been concluded in Moscow after secret talks. On 11th April LITERATURNAYA GAZETA accused the new Damascus newspaper AL-WAHDAH of publishing anti-Soviet articles, which alleged among other things that the Soviet Embassy in Baghdad was a centre of Iraqi Communist Party activity and propaganda.

The situation in Persia and in Turkey Articles painting a grim picture of present conditions in Persia and in Turkey have been appearing in the Moscow and the Central Asian press, under such titles as "The worsening of the economic situation in Persia", "Why Persian officers are discontented", "American expansion in Persia", "Crisis of the health services in Turkey", "Turkey facing disaster", etc.

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M I Z A N N E W S L E T T E R

APPENDIX

The XXIst Party Congress and the Tasks of Soviet Orientalists

The first issue of the new journal of Soviet oriental studies, PROBLEMY VOSTOKOV DENIYA, No. 1 of 1959, contains an article entitled "The XXIst Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Oriental Studies". The following passages are relevant to Soviet Middle Eastern studies (headings have been added - Ed.).

The non-socialist countries of the East "When examining questions connected with the international situation the congress paid great attention to an analysis of the heroic struggle of the peoples of non-socialist countries of the East against the colonizers. The very fact of the existence of socialism favourably influences the development of the national liberation movement. The strengthening of the world system of socialism deprives the imperialists of the possibility of infringing with impunity the independence won by many peoples of Asia and Africa. The example of the socialist countries shows the oppressed peoples that they can overcome their age-old backwardness by their own efforts and make rapid progress.

"Speaking of the great historical changes which have taken place in the countries of the East N.S. Khrushchev remarked that a number of countries which are not socialist, cannot, however, be classed with countries of the imperialist system. 'These countries, which have won national independence as a result of the liberation struggle, want to go their own way, by-passing the capitalist stage of development, in order, having finished with colonial oppression, to set about the building of society on other principles.' Many of the leading men of these countries are benevolently disposed towards the socialist countries, do not regard them as antagonists nor as the opponents of their aspirations for the building of a new life without imperialists and without colonial oppression. It is this which explains the fact of enormous international importance that good and friendly relations have been established between the socialist countries and such States. The balance of power is not now on the side of the imperialist States but on the side of countries of the world socialist system and countries conducting a fight against imperialism and colonialism. The majority of colonial and semi-colonial countries which not so long ago composed the reserve force and rear of imperialism as a result of a prolonged struggle of the peoples have turned into an active force for peace.

"Of primary importance is the characterization given in N.S. Khrushchev's report of communists as the most consistent and selfless fighters against colonialism and imperialism, and for the political independence and economic self-dependence of countries of the East. This characterization will undoubtedly help to expose the anti-communist campaign which is being conducted in certain countries of the East, and will dispel the unscientific and therefore wrong contraposition of socialism to communism which is made in printed works and oral speeches of certain leading figures of these countries.

Urgent contemporary tasks "In the resolutions of the congress it is stressed that in the domain of social studies scholars are faced with the considerable task of producing creative generalizations and a bold theoretical solution of the new questions put forward by life. From the high tribune of the congress there has rung out a sharp criticism of the continued lagging behind of many research institutions, collectives and individual workers from the demands which the new stage in the building of communism sets before social studies. It was noticed in particular that many institutes and individual scholars stand aside from deciding the most important practical problems of the building of communism and occupy themselves with abstract themes and in fact separate themselves from life. Published works are often of a descriptive character, repeat long since familiar theses, facts and arguments, and certain works contain mistakes and distortions.

"It must be admitted that this criticism can be immediately and directly aimed at the activities of Soviet orientalists. Putting the decisions of the XXth congress of the CPSU into practice, orientalists have achieved certain successes: they have brought about a change in favour of the study of problems relating to the present day, increased the number of works published on their subject, intensified the struggle against bourgeois ideology and revisionism and conducted a number of fruitful scientific discussions on important theoretical problems. None the less the work of Soviet orientalists is still far from satisfying the demands which present-day life sets before them. A profound study of the most urgent problems of contemporary life should be the main and basic objective. It is a matter of honour for our orientalists that they should produce works - monographs, brochures, articles, publications, etc. - which would promote a further creative elaboration of questions connected with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union with relation to countries of the East.

"The decisions of the XXIst Congress of the CPSU revealed the extreme importance of the world system of socialism for the fate of humanity. It is for this reason that problems connected with the building of socialism in the people's democracies of Asia, and first and foremost in the great Chinese Peoples' Republic, demand the immediate attention of Soviet

orientalists ... " (Here followed an account of the tasks facing Soviet students of China and neighbouring countries.)

Colonialism and after "Life today provides endlessly rich material for a deepened study of problems connected with the break-up of the colonial system and of the processes of the liquidation of colonialism. The production of fundamental works on these problems in which depth of research is combined with a thorough analysis of extensive factual material will be a considerable contribution to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the national and colonial question. A large place in the activities of Soviet orientalists is occupied by themes relating to the study of methods of political, economic and ideological penetration of imperialism into countries of the East, and research on, and exposure of, new forms of present-day colonialism which are inspired by the monopolies of the USA.

"Soviet orientalists in the centre and in the provinces consider it a task of primary importance to make a profound study of the political and economic structure, and also of the specific paths of economic development in sovereign countries of the East, and in particular to carry out careful and profound research on problems connected with state capitalism in countries of the East, with an analysis of its social and economic nature. The attention of orientalists studying problems connected with life today will undoubtedly be attracted by questions on the correlation of economy and politics in countries of the East, on internal and external conditions and factors relating to the realization of development potential in countries of the East by non-capitalist methods, and on the distribution of social forces in these countries.

"A backward department of oriental studies is the study of the position of the working class and the workers' movement in countries of the East. Outside the field of vision of the research workers there have remained a number of new problems and phenomena which are linked with the entrance of the most important countries of the East on to the path of sovereign development, in particular the struggle of the working class for a rise in the standard of living, and the role of the working class in the process of industrialization of economically poorly developed countries and in all social and State life.

"The considerable successes achieved in a number of sovereign countries of the East by the Communist and workers' parties are well known. Until now, however, the circle of research orientalists studying the workers' movement in countries of the East is still very narrow.

"The most important factor in the break-up of the colonial system of imperialism is the prolonged crisis in the agrarian structure of the colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries. In post-war years a

number of land reforms were carried out in countries of the East, yet we have still extremely few monograph analyses devoted to the changes which have taken place in the agrarian structure of countries of the East. In particular completely inadequate attention is being given to the study of problems relating to class differentiation inside the peasantry and problems of accelerated capitalist evolution in agriculture and the consequences arising from this. Of great interest and importance is the problem of the struggle of the working class for hegemony in the peasant movement in the new stage of development.

Soviet African studies "The intensification of the national liberation, anti-imperialist movement and the objective conditions accelerating the development of national capitalism in a number of countries of Asia and Africa demand an increased study of the complex questions relating to the formation of nations, which exercises, as we know, an enormous influence on the forms and methods of the liberation movement. Unfortunately hitherto the study of these problems has remained in oblivion. The production of fundamental works describing the formation of new nations in the countries of Asia, and in particular in Africa, is becoming a real necessity.

"Soviet African studies are gaining particular importance at the present time. The break-up of the colonial system has enveloped Africa too. Africa's role in the world capitalist economy is growing more and more, and also her role in international political life. However, works dealing with African studies issuing from the pen of Soviet researchers can be literally numbered in ones. Before research workers on Africa is an untouched field of activity. Of particular importance is the study of such problems as questions connected with the growth of the national liberation struggle of the peoples of Africa, the intensification of conflict between the interests of the imperialist powers in their struggle for African raw materials and markets, description of political organizations operating on the African continent, description of the tactics of the passive struggle which many political organizations in countries of Africa are maintaining, problems connected with relations between African States, etc.

"Students of Africa in Moscow, Leningrad and union republics are to intensify their activities in the study of the varied and complicated problems relating to African history, ethnography, economics and philology, and are to co-ordinate their efforts and considerably widen the extent of their research. The study of questions relating to the present-day political and economic situation in countries of the East is unthinkable without a study of the historical past of the peoples of these countries. The rich traditions of our pre-revolutionary oriental studies have been creatively adopted under new conditions and continued by Soviet researchers and orientalists.

Historical studies "A considerable number of works devoted to the history of various countries of the East have been produced through the efforts of scholars of Moscow, Leningrad, Tashkent, Stalinabad, Tiflis, Badu and many other centres of Soviet oriental studies. Many of the works of Soviet researchers have not only been highly valued in our country but enjoy deserved recognition far beyond its frontiers. None the less what has been done in this field is still far from being adequate. Up to now the historical past of the peoples of a number of countries of Asia and Africa has remained outside the field of vision of researchers. The number of fundamental studies devoted to the history of peoples of countries of the East in ancient times, medieval times and recent and modern times is still extremely small. Next in turn is the study of the most important problems of feudalism in countries of the East, the genesis of capitalism, the establishment of a working class, the formation of the bourgeoisie, etc. Works devoted to these and many other problems will help finally to dispel conceptions propagated by the colonizers on the 'organic backwardness' of countries of the East and the imaginary 'civilizing mission of the Western Powers'.

Languages and literatures "Soviet orientalists can mark with satisfaction certain achievements in the field of oriental philology. At present a comparatively wide circle of eastern languages and literatures is being studied in our country. A central contribution to the study of literatures and languages of the peoples of countries of the East has been made, together with Russian scholars, by specialists in philology and languages of the brotherly Soviet Socialist Republics, and also by scholars of the peoples' democracies. The study of the cultural heritage of peoples of Asia and Africa and the revelation of their outstanding contribution to world culture is not important in a closed self-sufficing way but strengthens the position of the peoples of the East in their struggle against imperialism. The conference of writers of countries of Asia and Africa which took place in Tashkent last year clearly showed the importance of literature as a powerful ideological weapon in the fight against colonialism and for the building of a new life in the East.

"The study and correct evaluation of the thousand-year-old literary traditions of the peoples of the East enables us to trace the struggle of 'two cultures' - the popular and the aristocratic - in these literatures. A thoughtful study of the folklore clearly shows the democratic traditions of popular art, and the enormous importance which folklore had in the formation of the progressive literatures of the peoples of the East. Together with this, philologists pay most attention to the study of the state of national literatures at the present day and to exposing the important part which these literatures play in the struggle against various forms of colonialism and against imperialist ideology.

"A profound study of the establishment and development of national literatures of countries of Africa and Asia will strike a crushing blow at the reactionary theories of Europe as the centre of culture. In this connection study of problems connected with interaction between literatures of the East and West becomes of great importance.

"A large number of Soviet linguist-orientalists are working fruitfully on the study of the process of the formation and development of many live and some dead languages of the East. Linguists are aware that their studies, however abstract they may appear at first sight, help towards the solution of the general problem, and lighten the struggle of the scholars of countries of the East against colonialism and its ideology. It must be remarked, however, that many languages of peoples of the East, and first and foremost languages of a number of peoples of countries of Africa and South-Eastern Asia, are hardly studied in our country. This serious failure must be eliminated as soon as possible. Another urgent task is the raising of the scientific level of theoretic generalizations in the field of linguistics and study of literature in order to pass from descriptive writing to a profound Marxist analysis of the ideology and artistic merit of contemporary and past literature and so that eastern philology will promote the growth of the authority of Soviet oriental studies among the intelligentsia of countries of Asia and Africa. The successful solution of important tasks confronting eastern philology is only possible by means of co-ordinating research work in this field with all branches of the study of eastern languages and, arising in connection with this, the theoretic problems of linguistics, work on textology and literary translation, literature studies and literary criticism ...

The 1960 Orientalists' Congress in Leningrad "As is known, in summer 1960 in Leningrad the 25th International Congress of Orientalists will be held, and later in the same place the 13th International Conference of Sinologues will meet. Soviet orientalists in co-operation with orientalists of the people's democracies and progressive orientalists of Europe, Asia, Africa and America will reflect the radical qualitative changes in the development of oriental studies in connection with the national independence won by the peoples of the East, and their first steps along a path which in a new way is revealing the enormous role of the peoples of Asia and Africa in world culture.

"There is less than two years to go before the convocation of the 25th International Congress of Orientalists and the 13th International Conference of Sinologues. The duty of all Soviet orientalists, oriental institutions and organizations is to take an even more active part in preparatory work which will lead to a new improvement in our work and to the winning of a worthy place for it in world oriental studies.

New journal of oriental studies "The journal PROBLEMS OF ORIENTAL STUDIES, which is to become a creative tribune of Soviet orientalists, is called upon to play a serious part in the solution of responsible problems which have been placed before Soviet oriental studies. The very name of the journal witnesses to the fact that its pages will publish first and foremost material dealing with problems and principles of a fundamental

character. This will promote the rallying of a wide group of scholars round the journal, interested in the further creative development of our oriental studies.

"The journal PROBLEMS OF ORIENTAL STUDIES sees its chief task in the illumination of questions relating to the present-day history, economy, politics, culture, literature and languages of the peoples of the countries of Asia and Africa. In its pages material on the life and struggle of the workers of the popular democratic countries of the East for the building of socialism will be systematically published.

Conclusion "The historical experience of all Soviet science shows that the daily care of the Soviet State, the Communist Party and Central Committee for the development of oriental studies and the unwavering interest of our peoples in the present situation of the peoples of the East and their historical past are a guarantee of further successes of Soviet oriental studies.

"The resolutions of the XXIst Congress of the CPSU have defined with exhaustive clarity the paths for further studies of Soviet orientalis. Using the enormous ideological wealth contained in these resolutions, orientalis will make their contribution towards the construction of a communist society."

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The above is a summary of the
information received from the
various sources and is intended
to provide a general overview of
the situation. It is not intended
to be a detailed report and should
not be used as a basis for
decision-making.

The information received from the
various sources is as follows:
1. The situation is generally
stable, with no major
incidents reported.
2. There is a slight increase in
the number of incidents reported
in the last few days.
3. The majority of incidents are
minor and have been resolved
without incident.
4. There is no indication of
any major threat to the
security of the area.
5. The situation is being
monitored closely and any
further developments will be
reported immediately.